

Chapitres seven hit hadde, of hevene and helle,
And erthe, and soules that therinne dwelle,
Of whiche, as shortly as I can hit trete,
Of his sentence I wol you seyn the grete.

first telleth hit, whan Scipioun was come
In Afrik, how he mette Massinisse,
That him for joye in armes hath ynome.
Than telleth hit hir speche and al the blisse
That was betwix hem, til the day gan misse;
And how his auncestre, African so dere,
Gan in his slepe that night to him appere.

Than telleth hit that, fro a sterry place,
How African hath him Cartage shewed,
And warned him before of al his grace,
And seyde him, what man, lered other lewed,
That loveth comun profit, wel ythewed,
He shal unto a blisful place wende,
Ther as joye is that last withouten ende.

Than asked he, if folk that heer be dede
Have lyf and dwelling in another place;
And African seyde: Ye, withoute drede,
And that our present worldes lyves space
Nis but a maner deth, what wey we trace,
And rightful folk shal go, after they dye,
To heven; and shewed him the galaxye.

Than shewed he him the litel erthe, that heer is,
At regard of the hevenes quantite;
And after shewed he him the nyne speres,
And after that the melodye herde he
That cometh of thilke speres thryes three,
That welle is of musyke and melodye
In this world heer, and cause of armonye.

Than bad he him, sin erthe was so lyte,
And ful of torment and of harde grace,
That he ne shulde him in the world delyte.
Than tolde he him, in certeyn yeres space,
That every sterre shulde come into his place
Ther hit was first; and al shulde out of minde
That in this worlde is don of al mankinde.

Than prayde him Scipioun to telle him al
The wey to come unto that hevene blisse;
And he seyde: Know thyself first immortal,
And loke ay besily thou werke and wisse
To comun profit, and thou shalt nat misse
To comen swiftly to that place dere,
That ful of blisse is and of soules clere.

But brekers of the lawe, soth to seyne,
And lecherous folk, after that they be dede,
Shul alwey whirle aboute therthe in peyne,
Til many a world be passed, out of drede,
And than, foryeven alle hir wikked dede,
Than shul they come unto that blisful place,
To which to comen God thee sende his grace!

The day gan failen, and the derke night,
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That reveth bestes from hir besinesse,
Berafte me my book for lakke of light,
And to my bedde I gan me for to dresse,
fulfid of thought and besy hevinesse;
for bothe I hadde thing which that I nolde,
And eek I ne hadde that thing that I wolde.

But fynally my spirit, at the laste,
forwery of my labour al the day,
Took rest, that made me to slepe faste,
And in my slepe I mette, as I lay,
How African, right in that selfe aray
That Scipioun him saw before that tyde,
Was comen, and stood right at my beddes syde.

The very hunter, slepinge in his bed,
To wode ayein his minde goth anon;
The juge dremeth how his plees ben sped;
The carter dremeth how his cartes goon;
The riche, of gold; the knight fight with his foon,
The seke met he drinketh of the tonne;
The lover met he hath his lady wonne.

Can I nat seyn if that the cause were
for I had red of African befor,
That made me to mete that he stood there;
But thus seyde he: Thou hast thee so wel born
In lokyng of myn olde book totorn,
Of which Macrobie roghte nat a lyte,
That somdel of thy labour wolde I quyte!

Citherea! thou blisful lady swete,
That with thy fyr/brand dauntest whom thee lest,
And madest me this sweven for to mete,
Be thou my help in this, for thou mayst best;
As wisly as I saw thee north/north-west,
When I began my sweven for to wryte,
So yif me might to ryme hit and endyte!

The Story.

THIS forseid African me hente anon,
And forth with him unto a gate broghte
Right of a parke, walled with grene stoon;
And over the gate, with lettres large ywroghte,
Ther weren vers ywriten, as me thoghte,
On eyther halfe, of ful gret difference,
Of which I shal yow sey the pleyn sentence.

Thorgh me men goon into that blisful place
Of hertes hele and dedly woundes cure;
Thorgh me men goon unto the welle of Grace,
Ther grene and lusty May shal ever endure;
This is the wey to al good aventure;
Be glad, thou rede, and thy sorwe of caste,
Hi open am I; passe in, and hy thee faste!



Thorgh me men goon, than spak that
other syde,
Unto the mortal strokes of the spere,
Of which Disdayn and Daunger is the gyde,
Ther tree shal never fruyt ne leves bere.
This stream you ledeth to the sorful were,
Ther as the fish in prison is al drye;
Theschewing is only the remedye.

Thise vers of gold and blak ywriten were,
The whiche I gan a stounde to beholde,
For with that oon encreased ay my fere,
And with that other gan myn herte bolde;
That oon me hette, that other did me colde,
No wit had I, for errour, for to chese,
To entre or flee, or me to save or lese.

Right as, betwixen adamauntes two
Of even might, a pece of iren yset,
That hath no might to meve to ne fro,
For what that on may hale, that other let,
ferde I, that niste whether me was bet,
To entre or leve, til African my gyde
Me hente, and shoof in at the gates wyde.

And seyde: Hit stondesth wryten in thy face,
Thyn errour, though thou telle it not to me;
But dred thee nat to come into this place,

for this wryting is nothing ment by thee,
Ne by noon, but he Loves servant be;
for thou of love hast lost thy tast, I gesse,
As seek man hath of swete and bitternesse.

But natheles, although that thou be dulle,
Yit that thou canst not do, yit mayst thou see;
for many a man that may not stonde a pulle,
Yit lyketh him at the wrastling for to be,
And demeth yit wher he do bet or he;
And if thou haddest cunning for tendyte,
I shal thee shewen mater of to wryte.

With that my hond in his he took anon,
Of which I comfort caughte, and wente in
faste;
But lord! so I was glad and wel begoon!
for overal, wher that I myn eyen caste,
Were trees clad with leves that ay shal laste,
Eche in his kinde, of colour fresh and grene
As emeraude, that joye was to sene.

The bilder ook, and eek the hardy asshe;
The tyler elm, the cofre unto careyne;
The boxtree piper; holm to whippes lasshe;
The sayling firr; the cipres, deth to pleyne;
The sheter ew, the asp for shaftes pleyne;